DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 381 897 EA 026 689

TITLE	Helping Middle Level and High School Students Develop Trust, Respect, and Self-Confidence.
INSTITUTION	National Association of Secondary School Principals, Reston, Va.
PUB DATE	Feb 95
NOTE	5p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1904 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091-1537 ($3 prepaid, nonmembers; $2, members).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
JOURNAL CIT	NASSP Practitioner; v21 n4 Apr 1995
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adolescent Development; Conflict Resolution; Early Adolescents; Educational Cooperation; Educational Philosophy; Elementary School Students; High Schools; High School Students; Intermediate Grades; Junior High Schools; Junior High School Students; *Middle Schools; Preadolescents; School Guidance; School Role; Self Efficacy; *Self Esteem; *Student Development
IDENTIFIERS	Middle School Students

ABSTRACT

Adolescents are entering middle level schools today with more sophisticated skills and a broader range of positive experiences than ever before. However, middle-school students undergo major physical, emotional, social, and cognitive changes. This publication describes the role of educators and the school in helping middle-school students develop the values of trust, respect, and self-esteem. Although principals and teachers should collaborate as team members, the first two of the following strategies are aimed at principals: (1) investigate resources; (2) assume the competency of students; (3) expect success; (4) provide a safe environment; (5) encourage moral reflection; (6) provide students with volunteer opportunities; and (7) provide conflict-mediation experiences. Four schools with effective middle-school programs are also described. Short Pump Middle School in Glen Allen, Virginia, has classrooms comprised of both regular and special-needs students. The middle-school philosophy of absolute teaming is successfully utilized at the Hall-Dale Middle School in Hallowell, Maine. Effective conflict-mediation programs have been initiated at Washington Middle School in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and at Highland Park High School in Detroit, Michigan. Each of the school principals reported the same key to success--involving the entire faculty, staff, and community. (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
T.F. Koerner
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

ED 381 897

NASSP
PRACTITIONER

VOL. 21, NO. 4 THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE ON-LINE ADMINISTRATOR APRIL 1995

Helping Middle Level and High School Students Develop Trust, Respect, and Self-Confidence

Adolescents are entering middle level schools today with more sophisticated skills and a broader range of positive experiences than ever before. Unfortunately, there are also increasing numbers of adolescents who are being forced to deal with too many negative life experiences. Middle level educators who deal with these students now and those at the secondary level who will soon receive them should take steps to raise students' trust, respect, and self-confidence.

More and more data describe our young adolescents as vulnerable to high risk behavior and failure. Adolescents' increasing involvement in violent crime, for example, indicates a serious decline in self-respect and trust in others. The Carnegie Council recognizes that middle level schools can recapture these youth (1989), but it also points out that schools often *add* to problems rather than solve help them.

Schools cannot take the place of parents, but they can change the environment for a major part of the student's day. School is where the majority of young adolescents have the most interaction with adults, and school personnel must make this contact conducive to developing values that will foster healthy development into adulthood.

The middle school philosophy accepts that young people between 10 and 14 years of age are entering a new, exciting, and rapidly changing part of their development. Every aspect of their lives is affected; teachers find these students wonderful and aggravating at the same time because of their behavioral ups and downs. Every adult involved must be aware of the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive changes and, most important, how these changes affect behavior. Only then can the school and parents plan programs that fit students' needs.

Administrators must ensure that all school personnel learn as much as possible about their students' development and the middle level school philosophy. They should organize teams to plan for all students to develop stronger feelings of self-worth and respect.

Middle level students undergo many changes in their cognitive abilities. Piaget describes this as the time when many young people begin to experience higher level thinking—they are now able to separate the ideal from the abstract. Many difficulties stem from these new abilities and adults' not understanding them. Compassionate adults must help them manage their reactions to their new abilities.

Elkind (1994) described two resulting egocentric characteristics in *All Grown Up and No Place To Go* that clarify many adolescent behaviors that seem strange and often negative to adults. The imaginary audience and the personal fable, for example, are phenomena that early adolescents may demonstrate by risk-taking and/or over-sensitive behaviors. Many young adolescents see themselves as able to accomplish anything because they are now "young adults," but they have not developed the cognitive skills necessary to make competent decisions in areas where they lack life experience.

Adults who are aware of natural development and who recognize these characteristics are in the best position to encourage positive self-images and values.

VALUES TO BE EMPHASIZED: TRUST, RESPECT, SELF-CONFIDENCE

When internalized, the values of trust, respect, and self-confidence help students enter adulthood confident of success. These values correspond to many of the needs that Maslow (1968) describes as basic to the motivation to learn. Motivation and value development are very close; they in turn engender honesty, responsibility, patience, commitment, focus, and enthusiasm.

EA 026 689

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Students who come to the middle level or secondary school with negative self-images will probably trust or respect no one. We cannot realistically expect students who believe that teachers "don't like them" or are "out to get them" to have realistic and balanced feelings about themselves. If students who hold such beliefs about school also have outside experiences that reinforce the negative "don't trust anyone," it is no wonder that many simply do not believe that school can provide the skills needed for a "better" life. School personnel who are not able or willing to respect students inadvertently feed their negative feelings and cannot expect students to respect them in return. If the adults believe that students will fail or do poorly, the students also believe it.

The feeling of incompetence with which many students enter middle level and secondary school may come in part from ill-founded assumptions that all have had the same life experiences and develop at the same rate.

Positive beliefs about one's capabilities and the knowledge that others recognize these capabilities may be necessary first steps toward respect for self and others. The development of self-confidence depends on adolescents being in an environment based on the belief that each student is competent and will succeed.

The middle level environment is an excellent time and place for adults to encourage positive progress toward adulthood. Eliminating tracking in the middle school has reduced both students' and teachers' feeling that some students cannot learn (George, 1993). Teachers who have untracked classes have been pleasantly surprised to find more students achieving, fewer students causing discipline problems, and fewer students failing. Adults must help young people to understand that they will be successful in others' eyes if they believe in themselves.

HOW CAN MIDDLE LEVEL SCHOOLS ENCOURAGE TRUST, RESPECT, AND SELF-CONFIDENCE?

Many activities and programs are available that stimulate basic values, and each school community should adopt those most appropriate for their situations. Although principals and teachers will collaborate as team members, the first two suggestions are directed more toward principals.

1. Investigate Resources

Principals can encourage faculty members to learn about programs that might be appropriate for their school. Principals must also demonstrate their belief that all team members are competent and will add valuable knowledge. Teachers provide the best information about student responses, and it is essential that they have as many research materials as possible as well as an environment conducive to discussion. This might involve outside resources, such as staff members from middle level schools that use alternative techniques and/or university personnel interested in and versed in middle level research. Attendance at conferences is an excellent way to learn about the many exciting programs being implemented in schools across the country. It is as important for staff members to trust that the principal believes in them as it is for students to trust that teachers believe in them. Change takes time and occurs in steps, and the team must constantly question, re-evaluate, and upgrade their programs.

Deciding which tools to include is simplified by a study from the Center for Early Adolescence (Scales, 1994) that lists a wide variety of important resources.

2. Assume Competency

A principal's attitude about the abilities of students and staff members sets a school's tone that creates an often-obvious mood that characterizes student-staff interaction. Hostility or tenseness foster neither respect nor self-confidence.

The principal sets the tone by welcoming and expressing expectations or by warning against misbehavior. Either tone will remain throughout the school year and possibly the principal's tenure. Principals who identify themselves as members of a collaboration present positive messages about the importance of the collaborative environment.

3. Expect Success

School personnel must expect achievement from all students and reinforce their efforts to succeed.

Students should be part of decision making, whether as a class, a team, or schoolwide. Suggestion boxes or class meetings suggest that students, teachers, and administrators are members of a team. This increases the feelings of efficacy and ownership essential for healthy decision making, respect, and self-confidence.

Self-efficacy builders are small but constant opportunities to succeed that school personnel can provide. Each level of personnel must have opportunity for both success and reinforcement. Principals trust teachers' decisions by encouraging them to try new ideas that they in turn model for students. Teachers need the freedom to try, fail, and try again with the complete support of the principal.

4. Provide a Safe Environment

Students need a physically and emotionally safe environment to develop trust, respect, and self-confidence, but the principal alone cannot make the atmosphere comfortable. All involved must accept their responsibilities.

Students can develop peer review boards to hear and decide the consequences of rule violations. Knowing that they have real control over part of their lives fosters ownership. Schools with conflict mediation panels have seen growth in students' beliefs in their decision-making abilities and in their respect and concern for others.

5. Moral Reflection

Principals, faculty members, and staff members must encourage opportunities for moral reflection that go beyond

simply voicing opinions and considering consequences of thoughts and actions. Students need to examine controversial topics in a safe forum.

While it may be easier to keep vocal parents quiet by avoiding controversial topics, there is no real value development without critical thinking. Providing such experiences under professional guidance is a scaffolding rarely available elsewhere.

Parents can be invited to be active participants in meetings. By internalizing the principles involved, their own examples of respecting others will underscore the importance of these values for students.

6. Volunteer Opportunities

Helping others is a powerful way to build self-respect, trust, and self-confidence. Having a seventh grader who reads at a fourth grade level work with a second or third grader does wonders for both. Volunteering promotes all basic values, encourages growth in many by-product values, and is an excellent way for students to experience success from their own activity.

7. Conflict Mediation

The past emphasis on using conflict mediation with adults inaccurately assumes that young people are unable to solve difficulties involving values or their own misbehavior. The 10 to 14-year-olds' cognitive development makes this one of the best times to begin training in conflict mediation; for the most part, they are concrete thinkers who must experience to understand abstract ideas. Middle level students are moving from parental control and direct guidance to being expected to make decisions about their own behavior in unfamiliar situations. They need experience before they can demonstrate competence in making decisions in areas that may be new to them.

Conflict mediation encourages students to resolve difficulties in ways that result in respect and trust. As students develop critical thinking skills on more abstract levels they can understand others' views on issues and think about how their decisions affect others—they learn "consequence." Guidance in determining which situations help learning is crucial and ensures that students experience situations that allow positive development. Conflict mediation does not help the "good" control the "bad"; it teaches students life skills that help them decide the direction and atmosphere of their school environment. School ownership must come from those who live in it, not only from those in power.

SCHOOLS WITH EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS

One way to demonstrate the value of these strategies is to focus on schools that use them. All principals reported the same key to success: Involving the entire faculty, staff, and community. None of these schools became models overnight, and all of them continue to change. Effectiveness is synonymous with change and perseverance.

1. Collaboration (all students in the same classroom)
Short Pump Middle School (1,200 students)
Glen Allen, Virginia
Principal: Lynn Thorpe, 804-360-0880
Teacher contact: Paulette Whitehurst, 6th grade

Short Pump Middle School has 14 collaborative classrooms for both regular and special needs students, 2 traditional classrooms, and 1 self-contained class for special ed. students who chose not to be in a collaborative class. Most of the special ed. students are in the collaborative classes, which have two teachers for most of the day.

A main reason that this school is effective, according to Paulette Whitehurst, is that "as a team we plan for the success of all of our students." Whitehurst has 24 regular students and 8 LD students for three morning classes; special ed. teacher Ellen Adams is part of the teaching team for two of those periods. The plan provides a safety net for regular students who do not test into a special program but who need more than traditional classes usually provide. Having the special ed. teacher in the room ensures that such students receive the attention they need.

While faculty members are involved in making things happen for all students, much of the success comes from the philosophy of principal Lynn Thorpe. Thorpe knows that change needs time and commitment; her faith that things can change includes that it does not come from the top.

The growth in respect, trust, and self-confidence by both teachers and students is impressive. The regular teachers are learning from the special ed. teachers that they are competent to work with special needs students. They now see themselves as successful with all students, which might not have occurred without the team approach. The special ed. teachers in turn feel more involved with the school, are no longer limited to knowing only a small number of students, and can work with all students.

Students are learning compassion, gaining more respect for all people, learning that fair is not always equal, and understanding that they do not have to be physically or academically perfect to be valued and cared for by others. All students are learning to cooperate and to build on each other's strengths. Their efforts are helping to produce a school environment that truly encourages trust, respect, and self-confidence.

Strong evidence for the program's success came from a special ed. student. When Thorpe asked him what he felt was different about the school, he said "I don't feel stupid any more."

2. Middle School Philosophy (absolute teaming)
Hall-Dale Middle School (230 students in grades 6–8)
Hallowell, Maine
Principal: Suzanne Olson, 207-622-4162

Hall-Dale has been implementing the middle school philosophy for eight years with the help of the faculty, staff, parents, and community. Although Hall-Dale is small, the ideas can be applied in any school setting.

The school has parent teams at each grade level. Parent team representatives join the teacher grade team meeting once a week and help decide what they need to address and how to address it. Last summer the seventh grade parent team responded to a problem of students not understanding consequences and formed a larger parent team in a summer program that addressed the issue in a positive manner.

The school now has a staff of 12 full-time and 30 part-time teachers who offer several foreign languages and have support staff in many content areas. The school uses total inclusion; there are no separate classes for differences.

The strong emphasis on respect for the whole person means that all respect the programs and ideas, which has a strong and positive effect on student values. Students see a united effort being made for them and understand that every person is responsible for the respect for others.

A lack of trust caused many students to be reluctant at the beginning to take an active role in the school. Parents and supporting staff members also had to learn that decisions affecting the school were to be made by the team, not only by the principal. Students have become more confident in finding solutions to problems, and they are becoming more open to change and the realities of consequences.

The community has obtained funds from the district administration for staff training in conflict mediation.

3. Conflict Mediation

Washington Middle School
Albuquerque, New Mexico
Principal: Mary Mercado, 505-764-2000

Washington Middle School, an urban school with a majority of non-white students, is experiencing success in both conflict mediation and multicultural planning. The school began using the middle school concept several years ago and adds components as students' needs change. Students' respect is seen in their efforts in mediation, and self-confidence is evident by the willingness of both staff members and students to approach problems directly.

Highland Park High School
Detroit, Michigan (1,000 students in grades 9–12)
Principal: Eric George
Counselor (contact): Victor Kennerly, 313-868-0322

Staff members at Highland Park developed a peer mediation program because of the high number of classroom disruptions and to address the many cases of detention and suspension. Victor Kennerly works with middle schools that feed into the high school so that students see conflict mediation as an effective way to solve problems in an atmosphere based on trust and respect before they enter the high school.

The small program will expand with the training of additional peer mediators. If the enthusiasm for the program is any indication, the impact on self-respect and self-confidence of both mediators and mediated will be substantial.

REFERENCES

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. *Turning Points: Prepaing American Youth for the 21st Century.* Report of the Council on Adolescent Development. New York: Carnegie Corporation, 1989.

Elkind, D. *All Grown Up and No Place To Go. Teenagers in Crisis.* Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1994.

George, P. S. "Tracking and Ability Grouping in the Middle School: Ten Tentative Truths." *Middle School Journal* 4(1993): 17–24.

Maslow, A. H. *Toward a Psychology of Being,* 2d ed. Princeton, N.J.: VanNostrand, 1968.

Scales, P. C. "Strengthening Middle Grade Teacher Preparation Programs." *Middle School Journal* 1(1994): 59–65.

Written by Jane Wolfle, assistant professor of education at Bowling Green University, Ohio.

Practitioner is a quarterly publication of the research department of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1904 Association Dr., Reston, Va. 22091-1537, telephone (703) 860-0200. Copyright 1995 by NASSP. Annual subscription rate of $4 is included in the dues of NASSP. Individual subscriptions are not available.

Additional copies may be ordered: single copies, $2 each ($3 for non-members); 2–10 copies, $1.75 each ($2.75 for non-members); 11–99 copies, $1.25 each ($2.25 for non-members); 100 or more copies, $1.15 each ($2.15 for non-members). Payment must accompany orders of $15 or less.

E. DON BROWN, *President, NASSP*
H. MICHAEL BROWN, *President-Elect*
TIMOTHY J. DYER, *Executive Director*
JAMES W. KEEFE, *Director of Research*
ROBERT MAHAFFEY, *Director of Publications & Marketing*
JAMES THEISEN, *Editor, Desktop Publisher*
EUGENIA COOPER POTTER, *Technical Editor*